

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

September 21, 1999

Mr. William E. Kennard, Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 Twelfth Street, S.W.
Washington D.C. 20554

Dear Mr. Chairman:

The Telecommunications Act of 1996 establishes a universal service fund to assist schools, libraries, and health-care providers -- disadvantaged by their geography and social conditions -- in obtaining vital telecommunication services. The health-care component of the program, as recognized by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) in Report No 99-32, is not working for many rural areas of the United States. We specifically call your attention to the shortcomings of the current program in places like Montana, the Insular Areas and Tribal lands. As a result of the "one size fits all" approach under current rules, some of the very neediest communities have not been able to participate in the program for a variety of reasons.

Presently, health and medical care needs in Rural America are simply overwhelming the available resources. Tele-health and tele-medicine can work to lessen the costs, and at the same time can dramatically improve the quality of and access to needed health and medical care. The Territories of American Samoa and Guam, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas Islands (CNMI) are very remote communities, exhibiting typical "rural" characteristics, that have severe health and medical care needs.

These Insular Areas are good examples of rural, remote communities which desperately need to improve the quality, accessibility, and effectiveness of health and medical care for their people through tele-health and tele-medicine, but are currently inhibited from taking advantage of these options by the high costs of telecommunications.

We understand the FCC is planning a study into this situation in the Insular Areas. As you undertake the study, we want you to be keenly aware that the Insular Areas are not presently able to obtain needed services through the Universal Service Fund and the health care program of the Universal Services Administrative Company (USAC), despite the fact that consumers and carriers in the Pacific Insular Areas are paying into the Universal Service Fund.

The problem is partly due to designation under current rules of Pago Pago (American Samoa), Agana (Guam), and Saipan (CNMI) as the nearest "urban center," and treating them as separate entities having specialist resources in each of their areas. These designations make it

impossible for Insular Area health care providers to affordably access specialist medical care providers and educational programs. Saipan can provide services to Tinian and Rota, but cannot gain access to specialist health care providers in Hawaii or elsewhere.

We urge the FCC to re-designate Hawaii as the "nearest urban center" and to treat the Pacific Insular Areas as one region. Hawaii is the nearest urban center that: has a School of Medicine and numerous fully staffed hospital facilities; already works with the region; has access to a network of quality health care providers; and has deployed a distance learning program. Re-designation would allow the LBJ Tropical Medical Center and the Commonwealth Health Clinic that have been working with health care providers in Hawaii, to connect to the State Tele-health Access Network (STAN).

STAN currently provides interconnection to 16 public and private hospitals, the Veterans Administration, and to the Tripler Army Medical Center. STAN, developed in part through the use of the USAC program, is able to downlink and distribute programs offered through satellites over the Continental United States, and also has 15 ISDN BRI's so that interconnections can be made to other tele-medicine and tele-health providers throughout the States.

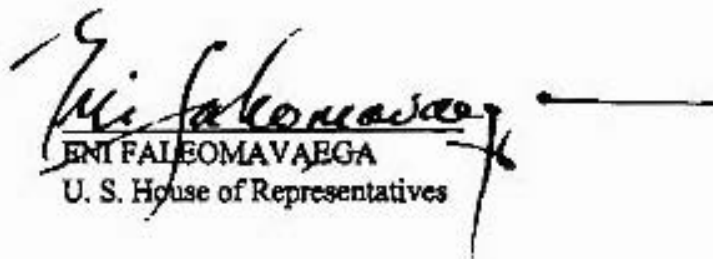
The re-designation we request will enable health care providers in the Insular Areas to obtain access to quality, affordable tele-medicine and tele-health. At the same we urge you to review the impact of the current rules on other rural areas within the continental United States. We believe you will find much of Rural America is being similarly denied full access to vital tele-medicine and tele-health services due to the existing regulations and their application.

Mr. Chairman, we look forward to working with you on these issues of vital importance to rural Americans throughout the country. Please let us know if you have further questions regarding this matter. We look forward to hearing from you at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely,



CONRAD BURNS
United States Senate


ENI FALEOMAVAEGA
U. S. House of Representatives



Post-It Fax Note	7571	Date		# of Pages	4
To	CHRISTINA HIGA	From	PATRY IDEUS		
Co./Dept.	PONCEBET	Co.	PIHOA		
Phone #		Phone #	956-6224		
Fax #	968019	Fax #	956-9512		

PACIFIC ISLAND HEALTH OFFICERS ASSOCIATION

November 22, 1999

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Agaña, Guam

Ms. Magalie Roman Salas
Secretary
Federal Communications Commission
445 Twelfth St., SW
Washington, DC 20554

Re: Federal-State Joint Board on Universal Service, CC Docket No. 96-45

Dear Ms. Salas:

The Pacific Island Health Officers Association (PIHOA) submits the following comments in response to the Public Notice released September 3, 1999.

The University of Hawaii School of Public Health Pacific Outreach Program and its affiliated servicing organization, the Pacific Island Health Officers Association, were established to encourage cooperation and communication among the U.S. Associated Pacific Jurisdictions, to promote functional and cost-effective solutions to common health service problems, and to collectively achieve improved health status for all residents of the U.S. Associated Pacific Jurisdictions. PIHOA is comprised of the principal health officers of the six Pacific countries and territories affiliated with the United States- American Samoa, Guam, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the Republic of Palau.

It is necessary that there is a cost-effective means of communication among the U.S. Associated Pacific Jurisdictions, PIHOA Office, U.S. Federal agencies, and the rest of the world. Communication between and among all parties is important to expedite PIHOA's strategic initiatives, project activities, and the day to day administration of the Association. The purpose of the Telecommunications Act of 1996 is to ensure that health care providers in rural and remote areas pay no more than health care providers in urban areas for telecommunications interconnectivity. The U.S. Associated Pacific Jurisdictions should have access to an affordable range of services (voice grade access, touch tone, access to emergency and operator services) available to urban consumers. Services provided are vital to education, public health, and public safety.

Section VI- Underserved Areas

Section F: Support for Rural Health Care Infrastructure

Other than Honolulu, in Hawaii, there are no urban areas in the U.S. Associated Pacific Jurisdictions, all meet the criteria commonly accepted as "rural". The U.S. Associated Pacific Jurisdictions are isolated from the U.S. mainland and the rest of the world. Communication capabilities are a necessity between and among the Pacific region, U.S., and other countries. Because of cost, entry into the telecommunications era is denied to health professionals, and others, resident in the region. The inability of health providers to access what are routine resources such as the National Library of Medicine or to economically consult with colleagues via email has a clear and obvious impact on the quality of health care available throughout the region. In order for there to be an infrastructure for health care in the U.S. Associated Pacific, economical communications must exist. PIHOA, as a member organization of the heads of the departments of health for the region, fully supports the intent of Section VI(F) of the Act.

As we move into the 21st Century, yet another important reason for improved, economical communication for the region has emerged. Telehealth and telemedicine are both minimally operational in the region. However, the cost of this critical innovation to the strengthening of the health infrastructure is seriously slowing its spread and impact. Diagnostic support for health providers is available through the Akamai program at Tripler. This email based, digital photograph enhanced system has provided critical support to the regional health providers and has had an impact on the need for medical evacuations to Hawaii, Guam and the Philippines. While these efforts have improved the quality of diagnosis and have reduced some of the need for medical evacuations, more affordable communication rates would allow the project to maximize in its potential impact.

A further need for affordable rates was demonstrated earlier this year when, through the facilities of PEACESAT and the American Samoa Telecommunications Authority (ASTCA), two public health courses were offered via interactive video linking students, at the University of Hawaii, School of Public Health and the staff at the Department of Public Health in Pago Pago, American Samoa. The Health Resources and Services Administration, Maternal and Child Health Branch has awarded the University of Hawaii, School of Public Health a grant to develop web-based continuing education courses for the Maternal and Child Health staff of health departments in the region. However, to effectively develop these

systems, the communications support upon which they depend must be affordable.

Section VII- Insular Areas
Section A: Defining Insular Areas

The areas formally known as the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands retain their special and historical affiliation to one another and with the inclusion of the territories of Guam and American Samoa retains that affiliation through the regional efforts of the Department of Interior, Office of Insular Affairs, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, and the Health Resources and Services Administration of the Department of Health and Human Services. In addition, other Federal agencies such as the Department of Education and the Environmental Protection Agency treat the area as a regional affiliation more than as separate and independent entities. As such, it is the request of PIHOA that the U.S. Associated Pacific Jurisdictions of American Samoa, Republic of Palau, Federated States of Micronesia, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands and Guam be treated in a similar manner. That is, the definition of insular areas should include the U.S. Territories of American Samoa, Guam, and Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands and the Freely Associated States of the Republic of the Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, and the Republic of Palau.

Section B: Rural Health Care Support

The Health Care Providers (HCP) in the U.S. Pacific Jurisdictions are in great need of using telehealth and telemedicine to improve quality, accessibility, and cost-effectiveness of health and medical care. They are now deprived of the major benefits of telemedicine and telehealth initiative, due to the high cost of connecting to Honolulu, Hawaii. Under the current Rural Health Care Program, the HCPs in the jurisdictions are unable to apply for rate discounts. The FCC should provide support for rural health care facilities' links to the nearest U.S. urban area with advanced health care facilities- Honolulu, Hawaii.

The U.S. Associated Pacific Jurisdictions lack modern health facilities. The cost of travel to other states or countries is very high. The health facilities lack medical specialists and trained personnel to provide advanced or specialized health care. As such, jurisdictions rely on telecommunications for purposes of diagnosis, research or coordination.

Ms. Magalie Roman Salas

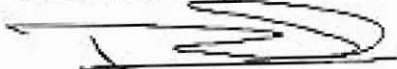
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November 22, 1999

Telehealth and telemedicine initiatives would be a tremendous improvement for their health care facilities.

In summary, we want it all! The expanded definition, the affordable range of services, the rate discounts for rural health providers, the works! This region has been, and remains, an integral part of the U.S. sphere of influence in the Pacific. As tensions ebb and flow, particularly in Asia, the need for this sphere of influence becomes more obvious and more strategic to the United States. Agreeing with our position on the rule making for the Act will strengthen that influence and at the same time serve as one more example of this nation's commitment to the people of the Pacific.

Yours sincerely,



D. William Wood
Interim Executive Director
Pacific Island Health Officers Association



MINA BENTE SAIS NA LIHESLATURAN GUAHAN
TWENTY-SIXTH GUAM LEGISLATURE

SENATOR EDDIE BAZA CALVO

CHAIRMAN

COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS, HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

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July 23, 2001

Mr. Michael K. Powell
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, S. W.
Washington, DC 20554

Facsimile: (202) 418-0232

Re: CC Docket No. 96-45 As it relates to using the Universal Service Fund for discounting telecommunications services for isolated Pacific communities.

Dear Mr. Powell:

The Telecommunications Act of 1996 established a Universal Service Fund to assist schools, libraries and health-care providers who are disadvantaged by geography and social conditions in obtaining vital telecommunications services. The health-care component of the program, as recognized by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) in Report No. 99-32, is not working for the Insular Areas. For sixteen months the FCC opened Docket 96-45 to examine issues pertaining to discounted telecommunications services for health care facilities in these areas. As I understand it, once the docket closed, the FCC was to prepare a report to the United States Congress of testimony received during the comment period inclusive of FCC proposed amendments to the Telecommunications Act of 1996.

As Chairman of the Committee on Public Works, Health and Human Services of the Twenty-Sixth Guam Legislature, I am officially inquiring on whether a report has been issued to Senator Daniel Inouye, Chairman, Subcommittee on Communications and Representative Fred Upton, Chairman, Subcommittee on Telecommunications & the Internet. Favorable action on your part of the testimonies submitted, Mr. Chairman, would enable the health care providers in these isolated Pacific communities to improve the quality of health care by accessing resources and specialists through telehealth and telemedicine applications.

Chairman Powell, Guam, the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas Islands (CNMI) and American Samoa pay into the Universal Service Fund, and like the rest of the country, we see the benefits of that fund for our schools and libraries. However, *unlike* the rest of the country, our hospitals and clinics do not see the benefit of the Universal Service Fund. I feel that this was an oversight that can be remedied by immediate FCC action of support. The testimony of the Insular Areas has urged the FCC to adopt rules that would re-designate the urban areas for American Samoa, Guam and the CNMI to be Honolulu, the nearest urban city with a medical school, advanced medical facilities and a population of over 50,000.

The re-designation will enable health care providers in the Insular Areas to obtain access to quality, affordable telemedicine and telehealth. At the same time I urge you to review the impact of the current rules on other rural areas within the continental United States. I believe you will find much of Rural America is being similarly denied full access to vital telemedicine and telehealth services due to existing regulations and their applications.

Chairman Powell, our governments are dealing with unemployment figures near the 15% mark, decreasing government revenues and a collapsing infrastructure system. In order for us to maintain acceptable levels of health care, we must use our dwindling resources more wisely, and that means using broad-band to educate our health care workers and to seek proper diagnosis from distant specialists for our patients. I see first hand the need to connect our medical facilities to a communications system that will allow a patient to stand in front of a camera and secure a second opinion from an off-island specialist, all for a fraction of the cost of what an airline trip would cost that patient's family.

I look forward to working with you on issues of vital importance such as this and appreciate your expedient response to this request. Should you have any questions regarding this matter, please contact me at (671) 472-4040.

Sincerely,



Senator Eddie Baza Calvo

cc: *I Maza Tahen Guðhan*
Congressman Robert A. Underwood
All Senators
All Media

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515

July 24, 2001

The Honorable Michael K. Powell
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20554

Dear Chairman Powell:

In September 1999, The Federal Communication Commission (FCC) opened CC Docket No. 96-45 to examine issues related to the Insular Areas. The comment and reply periods ended on December 17, 1999 and January 19, 2000, respectively. We are inquiring as to the status of the docket with respect to the Pacific insular areas.

We urge the FCC to adopt rules that would re-designate the "urban area" for American Samoa, Guam, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas Islands (CNMI) to be Honolulu, Hawaii, the nearest urban city with a medical school, advanced medical facilities, and a population of over 50,000. We also urge consideration that the maximum allowable distance be based on the distances between their main islands and Honolulu. This would enable the rural health care providers in these insular areas to improve the quality of health care and to increase access to health care resources through telehealth and telemedicine applications.

As you are aware, the designation of an "urban area" and "rural area" determines which health care providers and carriers are eligible for support under the Rural Health Care Program. The FCC, in its initial rulemaking for the Rural Health Care Program (RHCP), designated the urban areas for the Pacific insular areas to be Pago Pago in American Samoa, Agana in Guam, and Garapan in the Commonwealth of the North Marianas Islands. The designation was made despite the fact that none of these cities have a population of over 50,000. By defining these capital cities to be the urban area for the RHCP, the health care providers in these jurisdictions have been informed that the RHCP telecommunication discounts would only be applicable to interconnecting health care facilities in remote locations within their jurisdictions. For Guam, there are no health care facilities that would benefit from this definition. For American Samoa and the CNMI, the only health care facilities that would qualify are those located on remote islands. The health care providers in these areas are all seeking to connect to Honolulu, the nearest urban area with a medical school.

The health care providers in these designated urban areas reflect the size, remoteness, and economic status of the jurisdictions. They are seeking access to advanced medical facilities. The total populations of these insular areas are about 58,000 for American Samoa, 60,000 for the CNMI and 154,800 for Guam. These areas qualify respectively for the E-Rate Program at the 90 percent, 89 percent, and 76 percent levels. The jurisdictions are also defined as rural under the

U.S. Department of Agriculture rural development program among others.

As a result, despite paying into the universal service fund, these jurisdictions have not been able to benefit from the telecommunication discounts that were intended to help the health care providers in communities such as those described.

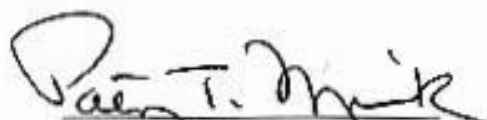
During the comment period for the above docket, health care providers in these jurisdictions and telecommunication carriers raised the need to redefine the urban areas and to enable the maximum allowable distance to be based on their geographic location. The comments provided by the territories, the Pacific Island Health Officers Association and the Health Resources and Services Agency, and the American Samoa Telecommunications Authority, requested that the urban area be re-designated to the closest urban area with a medical school. Thus, the Pacific insular areas would be able to apply for the discounted telecommunication services afforded the many communities with similar characteristics. We concur with their comments.

The insular areas contribute to the Universal Service Fund, they represent the types of communities that were envisioned to be served by the RHCP, and they have similarly responded to the docket that was opened in September 1999. We look forward to an update on the status of the docket and hope the forthcoming rulemaking will address the problems of the Pacific insular areas.

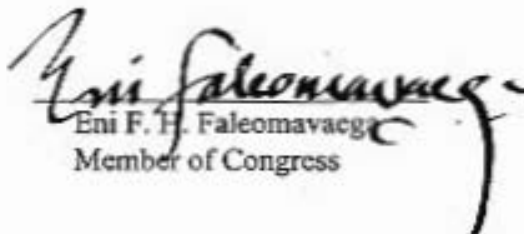
Sincerely,



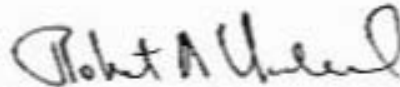
Neil Abercrombie
Member of Congress



Patsy T. Mink
Member of Congress



Eni F. H. Faleomavaega
Member of Congress



Robert A. Underwood
Member of Congress

DANIEL K. INOUE
Hawaii

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Subcommittee on Defense

COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND TRANSPORTATION
Subcommittee on Surface Transportation
and Maritime Matters

COMMITTEE ON INDIAN AFFAIRS

DEMOCRATIC STEERING COMMITTEE

COMMITTEE ON RULES AND ADMINISTRATION

United States Senate

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September 18, 2001

The Honorable Michael K. Powell
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20554

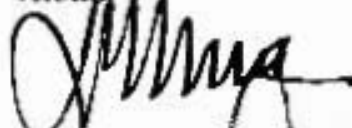
Dear Chairman Powell:

In September, 1999, the Federal Communications Commission released a *Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking* regarding the promotion and deployment of telecommunications services to American Samoa, Guam, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas Islands.

American Samoa, Guam, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas Islands are considered unserved and underserved areas for telecommunications services. These insular areas have been contributing and continue to contribute to the Universal Service Fund without receiving the benefits from the Rural Health Care Program telecommunication discounts which were intended for such areas.

The Insular areas are in need of assistance. I am concerned that the docket has been open since September, 1999, without resolution. Within all applicable rules and regulations, I would appreciate your consideration in expediting a decision on this matter.

Aloha,



DANIEL K. INOUE
United States Senator

DKf:kk



Guam Memorial Hospital Authority Aturidåt Espetåt Mimuriåt Guåhan



850 GOV. CARLOS CAMACHO ROAD, OKA, TAMUNING, GUAM 96911
TEL.: 647-2444 or 647-2330 - FAX.: (671) 649-0145

May 29, 2002

Commission's Secretary
Office of the Secretary
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554

Subject: Re-designation of Urban Area for Rural Health Care Program in the Pacific Insular Areas

Dear Chairman Powell and Commissioners:

Guam Memorial Hospital Authority is in full support of the comments by the Governor of Guam regarding the redefinition of Honolulu as the urban center for Guam for the Rural Health Care Program.

In a 1998 report on health care status in the U.S. associated Pacific Basin jurisdictions, the Institute of Medicine recommended to "... *support distance-based learning and telemedicine consultations, ... explore ways to decrease costs for health telecommunications, ... [and] seriously explore the establishment of educational links within the region and with other areas of the world.*"

Re-designating Honolulu as the urban center for Guam would open the way to promising health-related distance learning and telemedicine applications that support the recommendations from the Institute of Medicine.

For years, the high cost of telecommunications on Guam and in the Pacific Basin, e.g. \$200,000 a year for a standard T-1 line between Guam and Hawaii, has hampered many efforts to develop and implement such projects. The potential benefits are enormous, from improving access to specialty consultations, - thus reducing the need for costly off-island referrals -, to building local capacity by providing quality continuing health and medical education, through simply improving communications among providers in the Pacific and with the mainland, and reducing the feeling of professional isolation that prevents us from retaining skilled providers.

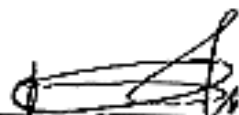
More specifically, discounted telecommunications between Guam and Honolulu would provide affordable access to the State of Hawaii Telehealth Access Network (STAN) for Guam Memorial Hospital, the Department of Public Health and Social Services, the Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse, and the University of Guam College of Nursing. In these times of declining budgets, rising unemployment and poor economy on Guam, savings could reach over \$200,000 for each of these agencies in communications costs alone, notwithstanding the indirect savings resulting from improved clinical outcomes.

Guam Memorial Hospital has been participating for almost two years now in the development of local and regional telehealth plans that establish the needs of our populations, and offer technological solutions to the health care issues we are facing. These plans rely heavily upon basic telecommunications services that are still not affordable to most of us in the Pacific Basin.

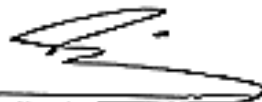
In comparison, all of the hospitals on the neighbor islands of Hawaii that are connected to the STAN network are current recipients of discounted telecommunication services under the Rural Health Care program, including the outpatient clinics of the Veterans Administration. With a far greater isolation, and in spite of its full participation to the Universal Service Fund, Guam remains ineligible for similar discounts.

I hope that the Federal Communications Commission will reconsider this issue, and re-designate Honolulu as the urban center for Guam and for the other U.S. associated Pacific Basin jurisdictions for the purpose of the Rural Health Care Program.

If you need further information, or if I can be of any assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me at (671) 647-2211.



David Shimizu, ~~Ph.D.~~ Ed.D.
Hospital Administrator



Max Palisson, Ph.D.
Director of Telemedicine/Telecommunications



GOVERNMENT OF GUAM
AGANA, GUAM 96910

DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE
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CARL T.C. GUTIERREZ
Governor of Guam

MADELEINE Z. BORDALLO
Lieutenant Governor

May 30, 2002

AURORA F. CABANERO
Acting Director

DMHSA 02-05028

MEMORANDUM

Commission's Secretary
Office of the Secretary
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554

Re: Re-designation of Urban Area for Rural Health Care Program in the Pacific Insular Areas

Dear Chairman and Commissioners:

Buenas!

The Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse is in full support of the comments from the Governor of Guam regarding the redefinition of Honolulu as the urban center for Guam for the Rural Health Care Program.

Due to the distance between our various sources in the mainland for medications and other resources (grants, supplies, educational opportunities, technical resources for assistance, etc.), Guam as well as the other United States territories in the Pacific Region are at a disadvantage (especially in light of the time difference involved). This situation affects our ability to communicate in a timely fashion and at times interferes with deadlines we are obligated to observe. Our ability to maintain present grants as well as standards of care and to pursue future grants will be greatly enhanced by this measure.

If we can be of further assistance, please, do not hesitate to contact my office at 647-5330/5303 or fax at 649-6948 or email at aurora@mail.gov.gu.

Dangkolo Na Si Yu'os Ma'asel

Sincerely,

A.F. Cabanero
AURORA F. CABANERO
Acting Director

APC:tl



Commonwealth Now!



UNIVERSITY OF GUAM
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COLLEGE OF NURSING AND HEALTH SCIENCES

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May 30, 2002

Commissioner's Secretary
Office of the Secretary
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street SW
Washington, D.C. 20554

RE: Designation of Urban Area for Rural Health Care Program in the Pacific Insular Areas

Dear Chairman Powell and Commissioners:

The University of Guam fully supports the comments by the Governor of Guam regarding the re-designation of Honolulu as the urban center for Guam. This change opens the way for Telehealth and Distance Education at more affordable prices.

The College of Nursing and Health Sciences (CNHS) has conducted academic distance education classes to the Micronesian area for seven years. Presently, continuing education is provided to the health care professionals of Guam and the region.

The Dean of the College of Nursing and Health Sciences managed a Health Resource Service Association grant to develop local telehealth plans and then a regional plan built on the individual jurisdictional plans. This has been a collaborative effort between Health Services and Health Education. In the future, these plans can guide the establishment of new partnerships. However, basic telecommunication services are needed for the plans to be implemented.

If Honolulu was designated as the "urban area" for Guam and other U.S. associated Pacific Basin jurisdictions, the urban area rates of Hawaii could be applied, which would dramatically reduce the cost of telecommunications lines from the CNHS to the State of Hawaii Telehealth Access Network (STAN) and the medical centers and educational institutions in Hawaii that are part of this network, including the University of Hawaii School of Nursing.

Hopefully, the Federal Communications Commission will designate Honolulu as the urban center for Guam and for the other U. S. Associated Pacific Basin jurisdictions for the utilization of the Rural Health Care Program.

Sincerely,

Maureen M. Fochtman, Ed.D., R.N.
DEAN/Director of Nursing

05/30/2002 15:56 FAX 671 734 2066

DPHSS CPHO

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GOVERNMENT OF GUAM

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH & SOCIAL SERVICES
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GOVERNORMedelcio Z. Bordallo
LIEUTENANT GOVERNORDennis G. Rodriguez
DIRECTORJoe R. San Agustin
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

MAY 30 2002

Martene H. Dorch, Secretary
Federal Communications Commission
Office of the Secretary
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554

Subject: Re-designation of Urban Area for Rural Health Care Program in the Pacific Insular Areas

Dear Madam Secretary,

The Department of Public Health and Social Services is in full support of the comments of the Governor of Guam regarding the redefinition of Honolulu as the urban center for Guam for the Rural Health Care Program.

Recent terrorism events have shown that vital telecommunications services can be used to warn our citizenry thereby reducing loss of human lives. Also, considering vast distances between Guam, the U.S. mainland and other Pacific Islands, any discounts in telecommunications could provide for significant cost savings and improvement in the delivery of public health services.

Providing more affordable telecommunications between Guam and the several medical centers in Hawaii would mean that much-needed improved telemedical services could be implemented, which would result in faster turnaround in diagnosis and cost savings for off-island medical transfers. Low cost communications between Guam and the State of Hawaii Telemedicine Network (STAN) would also provide a unique opportunity to develop distance education programs to train our local healthcare force and improve our capacity to care for our patients locally.

The Department of Public Health and Social Services has been working for over a year now with Guam Memorial Hospital, the University of Guam and the medical community to develop such services. Our Health Alert Network would include neighboring islands and our telecommunication capacities with the Laboratory Response Network would be upgraded. Several of these projects could finally be implemented with the noted expected outcomes if affordable telecommunications are available through the re-designation of Honolulu as the urban center for Guam.

If I can be of any further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me at (671) 735-7102 or Mr. Enrique F. Torres, Program Coordinator IV, at (671) 735-7306.

Respectfully submitted,

DENNIS G. RODRIGUEZ

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OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
GUAM

May 31, 2002

Ms Marlene H. Dortch, Secretary
Office of the Secretary
Federal Communications Commission
445 12 Street, SW
Washington, DC 20534

RE: WC Docket No. 02-60
Designation of Urban Area for Rural Health Care Program in the Pacific Insular Areas

Dear Madame Secretary,

Hafa Adel from Guam, America in Asia. I am writing to express my continued support for the applicable aspects of the Government of Guam's comments originally filed in regard to CC Docket No. 96-45 on December 17, 1999.

Our government continues to be supportive of the Federal Communications Commission's efforts to recognize the special needs and unique challenges faced by insular areas such as Guam. The redefinition of Honolulu as the urban center for Guam for purposes of the Rural Health Care Program is a simple and ideal solution to a difficult problem.

The Commission is familiar with the high costs associated with telecommunications in the Pacific Basin, including Guam, and these costs have hampered many efforts to develop and implement distance learning and telemedicine applications.

Congress' intent has been to make sure that insular areas like Guam receive the support they need to bring down the high cost of providing telemedicine to rural health care providers. The benefits from reducing these costs can bring enormous benefits to patients and medical professionals alike, from increasing access to consultations and improving the quality of medical education locally, to furthering communications among health care providers and hopefully reducing the number of referrals to off-island facilities.

Docket No. 02-60 is an important opportunity to address the intent of Congress and correct some of the difficulties that insular residents have been suffering.

Sincerely,

CARL T.C. GUTIERREZ

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CONG UNDERWOOD

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ROBERT A. UNDERWOOD
Guam

ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE

SUBCOMMITTEES:

Military Readiness

Military Personnel and Facilities

Military Readiness and Operations

(Joint) Oversight Panel

Security Matters

RESOURCES COMMITTEE

SUBCOMMITTEES

Foreign Conservation, Wildlife, and Oceans
Energy Matters

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515-5301

May 31, 2002

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Mariene Dortch, Secretary
Federal Communications Commission
Office of the Secretary
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Secretary Dortch,

Since the passage of the Telecommunications Act of 1996, Guam and the other Pacific Insular areas have been unable to benefit from the "Rural Health Care Program" because of a technicality.

Because the program would serve the island of Guam and its people tremendously, I strongly lend my support to the endeavor to re-designate Honolulu, Hawaii as a Rural Health Care Program urban center for the region.

In September 1999, the Federal Communications Commission recognized the designation of "urban area" would disadvantage the insular areas, and correction is necessary.

I will do what I can to help address the situation. I thank you for the opportunity to make this request on the behalf of my island.

Sincerely,

ROBERT A. UNDERWOOD
Member of Congress